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September 24, 2003

Ms. Marlene H Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S W
Washington, D. C. 20554

**Re: In The Matter Of Improving Public Safety Communications In The
800 MHz Band; WT Docket No. 02-55(Ex Parte)**

Dear Madam Secretary:

The Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Department has licensed an 800 MHz communications system, which is used by our Department and several other local and state agencies. Our system is used by our Department to carry out all Sheriff Office business, and as a secondary system primarily for officer safety by several local and state agencies such as:

Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries, Sterlington Police Department, Louisiana Department of Corrections Probation and Parole, and Louisiana Department of Alcohol and Tobacco

The Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Department is not currently experiencing any type of interference problems with the 800 MHz band, and is not aware any other agencies in the state who are having problems in this band

We have been made aware of the suggestions made by Nextel Communications to reallocate the 800 MHz band, resulting in forced retuning or replacement of many Public Safety communications systems. Nextel calls this plan a Consensus Plan. Our agency is endorsing a simpler and less costly plan, called the Balanced Approach, to deal with interference in the 800 MHz band. This office is not having any interference problems in the 800 MHz band. We have conducted an evaluation of our exposure under the Consensus Plan and believe that implementation of that plan would be detrimental to the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Department and many other 800 MHz users in the state.

Again we oppose the Nextel Communications' so called "Consensus Plan." We believe that the Consensus Plan will unnecessarily jeopardize Public Safety communications systems. The Consensus Plan is extremely complicated. The Consensus Plan requires Public Safety licensees to relocate to alternate frequencies in 12 months. Given the

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complexity of some Public Safety systems, we believe 12 months is unrealistic. The Consensus Plan protects Public Safety licensees from interference only if they meet certain signal strength and receiver requirements that many Public Safety systems are not in a position to meet. Public Safety communication systems not meeting these requirements will need to expend significant resources to ensure that they are protected from interference.

I urge the FCC to adopt the "Balanced Approach," which was filed on May 29, 2003. The Balanced Approach essentially strengthens current procedures that resolve interference problems. The Balanced Approach would be simpler and more effective. This approach does not require Public Safety licensees to relocate, and it takes pro-active steps to immediately deal with Public Safety interference by relying on technical solutions and increased enforcement. The Balanced Approach is less disruptive and less expensive than the Consensus Plan.

Sincerely,

Richard Fewell, Sr., Sheriff
Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office
Monroe, Louisiana